CHAPTER III

TECHNOLOGY, AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND TRADE
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The social progress and stability of the Darrangi people was largely dependent on the economy of the rajya. It was a self-sufficient village economy where both men and women made important contributions. The natural resources of the rajya had a profound impact on the economy and the society. The rivers of the rajya not only provided a means of communication but its sands also contained gold-dust. The forests of Darrang had an abundance of trees which led to the growth of woodcraft while bamboo was abundant and used for different purposes. Primarily agriculturists the Darrangi cultivators had the knowledge of dong irrigation in the paddy cultivation. The technology behind the construction of the ponds is an important aspect. The people cultivated other crops for their own consumption, some of which, especially mustard had export value. They also had different subsidiary crafts and industries like cane and bamboo, pottery, brass and bell-metal, weaving, etc., which not only met the local demand but was also exported. The extensive road and communication system had impacted the flourish of trade and commerce. Exports and imports were carried on chiefly through periodical trade-fairs held in different parts of the rajya through which the state was linked to the world market. Government revenue was realized, besides land tax, through personal labour, products and presents. With the establishment of the Ahom lordship over the Darrangi Rajya, the Darrangi Rajas had to pay a huge amount of tribute which badly affected its economy.

The rajya had abundant natural and forest resources. Gold-dust was found in almost all the mountain streams of the north that flowed into the Brahmaputra.¹ Gold-washing was carried out in the sands of several rivers of the rajya and it is said that the Bhareli (Bhairabi) river yielded gold-dust of superior quality.² It was largely used in the Darrangi

¹ John M'Cosh, Topography of Assam, Logos Press, New Delhi, (First published in 1837) 2000, p. 57.
society for making ornaments, which were mainly used by the rich and upper classes and a small quantity of gold was exported, and enhanced the revenue of the state.

Most parts of the rajya especially the northern areas were covered by rich forests with different species of trees, and a variety of animals and birds abound. Some of the trees like sal, segun, titachapa, sonaru, gamari, kadamba, ajhar, kahir, chandan, agaru, etc., were of great value and was used for house-building, furniture for household needs, dolas and also for different kinds of boats. This led to the growth of woodcraft in the rajya. Some of the woods particularly the agaru or aloe wood, which was mainly used for perfumery, was in great demand outside the state, especially among the Mughals. The Mughals procured the agaru wood from the forests of Darrang often through smuggling, as their entry to the rajya was restricted. There is evidence that Ratan Shah, a Mughal merchant bought agaru wood along with other articles at Belsiri near Singari in the Darrangi Rajya, for the Mughal Emperor. The forests of Darrang produced a considerable quantity of lac and beeswax, which were also important articles of export.

People were largely dependent on bamboo which was extensively used in house-building, furniture, different kinds of fishing and hunting implements, fencing and so on. Besides the wild forest bamboo, the people also planted it in their backyard. Generally they planted bamboo to the west of their houses to protect themselves from storm as usually wind blows from western direction and to keep their houses cool during the summer season. Bamboo was so valuable and important in the socio-cultural life of the people that some people worshipped it. Even today bamboo is of great importance in the cultural and economic life of the people.

Different kinds of animal, big and small, abounded in the forest of the Darrangi Rajya, viz., elephant, rhino, tiger, lion, buffalo, bear, deer, pig, etc. Wild elephant and buffalo

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4 It has discussed in Chapter I, footnote 19, p. 9. There were different kinds of dolas such as kekora dola, fati saidia dola, dhekura dola, etc., used by different ranks of people.
were domesticated; buffaloes were extensively used to plough, while the elephants were used not only for transport and in wars, but also considered as a status symbol. The deer and the pig were used for meat. The forests of Darrang were abundant with different kinds of birds, particularly the peacock, which were of great importance.8

People had great veneration for the elephants. Therefore, as Shihabuddin Talish observed, the Assamese considered the sale of an elephant as the most disgraceful of acts, and never did so.9 It was generally the men who would undergo training to catch the wild elephants and domesticate them. Generally the elephants were caught in three ways i.e. by melā shikar or noosing operation, by enclosing one or more salt springs through erection of stockades in which “pons” (trained elephants) were used to trap wild elephants and by erection of stockades or khedas in the open fields into which elephants were driven after having been surrounded by a cordon of sentries.10 The Darrangi Rajas themselves engaged in catching wild elephants. It is reported that in 1695 A.D. Raja Indra Narayan constructed a rampart (garh) for catching elephants under Harisinga mauza and the place became famous by the name Hatigarh.11 In Assamese ‘hati’ means elephant and ‘garh’ means rampart. There was a great demand for elephants outside the rajya especially in the Mughal territory. It is evident that Mansur Khan, the Mughal governor of Bengal made repeated applications to the Ahom king, who was at that time the overlord of the Darrangi Rajya, for permission to catch elephants in Bargaon, Balipara and Singari in the Darrangi Rajya.12 The elephants were so precious to the Mughals that they even undertook invasion to obtain them.13

The population of Darrang, as of other parts of Assam of the period under review, was almost entirely rural.14 They lived in villages and depended chiefly on agriculture for

10 Bengal Government Papers, 1870-1874 A.D., Elephant Catching in Assam, File No. 36/43. State Archives, Dispur, Guwahati.
11 Jagannath Bhattacharyya, Koch Rajar Buranji, preserved in the house of Durga Charan Bhattacharyya, Sarabari, Darrang, Assam, Not date.
14 W. W. Hunter, op. cit. p.119.
their livelihood. Shihabuddin Talish, who accompanied Mir Jumla to Assam in 1662 A.D., observed that the Uttarkul (the north bank of the Brahmaputra river) was thickly populated and well-cultivated. The wants of the rural population were few and simple. They cultivated rice, pulses, vegetables, and fruit for their own consumption and mustard for oil to light their lamps or saki and silk or cotton for their garments. Almost every family, high or low, from the humble peasant to the nobility was engaged in cultivation. It is evident that Hariya Mandal, the progenitor of the Koch royal family, himself worked in the field. Therefore, there was no restriction for the Darrangi royal family to participate in agricultural activity. Similarly Gobinda Atai, the founder of the Khatara Satra, 20 km west of Mangaldai Sub-division, too had taken up cultivation with the help of the bhakats (disciples). Even those engaged in other crafts and industries took up agriculture as their subsidiary occupation. Rice formed the staple crop of Darrang. The paddy cultivation naturally constituted the chief economic activity of the people and a proverb goes that ‘Jar nai dhan, tar nai man’, which literally translated meant that ‘those who have no grain, have no dignity.’ The lands of Assam were known for its fertility and for the production of a variety of rice, paddy and vegetables, and Darrang was no exception in this regard. In the rainy season, the rivers, which originated in the north, inundated the fields. This inundation generally left alluvial deposits on the fields and made the land naturally very fertile. Therefore, the art of manure was not generally used in the paddy cultivation.

However, the people used cow-dung as manure for their homestead where sugarcane, betel-nut, etc., were grown. The people of Darrang domesticated a good number of cattle, of which the cow was considered the most important form of wealth. The widely-

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15 Edward Gait, op. cit. p.133.
17 Local earthen lamp.
18 K. L. Barua, Early History of Kamrupa, (From the earliest times to the end of the sixteenth century), Lawyer’s Book Stall, Assam, 1988, p.192.
21 A. J. M. Mills, op. cit, p.103; and also, Edward Gait, op. cit. p.314.
used proverb, ‘jar nai garu, shi sabatokai saru’, literally translated: ‘those who have no cow are inferior to all’ reveals social stratification in the form of possession or non-possession of the cow. Therefore, gobar or cow-dung was available in plenty and used as manure. This traditional practice still exists.

The dong system of irrigation was a remarkable feature in agriculture of the Darrangis. The climate was characteristically monsoonal which effectively controlled the whole agricultural settings and arrangement of crop seasons. Shihabuddin Talish observed that it rained for eight months in the year and even the four months of winter were not free from rains. Nevertheless, the art of irrigation was well known to the Darrangi cultivators. The northern part of the rajya was sandy and dry, which required more water for paddy cultivation. Therefore, irrigation was resorted to on a limited scale and this system was especially common in tracts inhabited by the Kacharis. Robinson recorded that “the Kacharis along the northern frontier of Chatguri, and Chutia, and about the Bhutan Duwars, exhibit an exception to the general neglect of irrigation. They are in the habit of extensively irrigating their rice fields from the small streams which intersect these districts.” The Kachari people, who came together in large numbers for this kind of work, built dams on small streams and watercourses and conducted the water to the field by means of canals called dong, sometimes to a considerable distance. It is learnt that the Kachari or the Boro were the initiators of this method of drawing water from the high lands to the paddy fields in the low-lands. They were certainly the best agriculturists and cultivated a great diversity of crops.

Another important feature in agriculture was the pond-water management technology. A large number of big ponds called pukhuri are located in the Darrang district, of which several were dug during the reign of the Darrangi Rajas. Although the ponds were primarily constructed for the supply of drinking water, they also provided minor

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26 William Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Assam, Sanskaran Prakash, Delhi, India, 1975, p. 221.
irrigation facilities to some extent, to the cultivators. The contribution of the Darrangi Rajya to the technology was that the sides of the ponds were constructed by bringing in earth from nearby sources without extensive excavation at the site. The water level of the ponds was higher than the paddy field. A wooden pole called nagkup\(^{29}\) of about 20 to 25 feet long crinkled by a Barhai or carpenter was bored deeply into the ponds causing water to come out automatically through these crinkles. When the water level of the ponds became low especially during the cold season, the nagkup was shackled to a boat with the help of which water came out through the crinkles of the nagkup. Generally hard and long durable wood like sal was selected for this purpose. This was an indigenous technology of the Darrangi Rajya. The pond thus not only formed a reservoir of water, but also made it easy to drain water from the ponds to the paddy field through canals cut out of the sides. This system was specially used at the time of preparing the nursery for the seedlings, called kathiatoli, a cultivation process which was introduced by the Ahoms.

The implements used for agriculture were crude and simple and based on traditional knowledge system. A plough called nangal made of a crooked piece of hard wood, locally available, fitted with a small iron-share called phal was used for tilling the soil. This was the only part of the plough that the cultivator had to buy from the Kamar or blacksmith. It had a yoke called joali fitted with four salbaris (pegs) at its two ends, which were fixed on the shoulders of the bullocks or buffaloes. A pole called dila made of wood or bamboo about seven feet long was fixed with the plough and reached the yoke. The other implements used included a mai, dakura, dakan, bindha, jabka, khanti, kanchi and kodal. The harrow, known as mai, made of bamboo was used for breaking clods and leveling the land. The pole of bamboo or dakura was connected to the harrow with dakan (traces) and was dragged by the bullocks. The bindha or large rake dragged by the bullocks was generally used in the ahu paddy fields to pull out weeds while the hand rake (jabka) was used to gather it. Other implements included the iron hoe (kodal) fitted with a long bamboo handle was used to create furrows or ali which helped to retain

\(^{29}\) Ram Chandra Deka and Prasanna Kumar Nath (eds.), Saranga Saurav, Printmatics, Mangaldai, Assam, 2005, p. 28.
water, sickle (kanchi) used for reaping harvest, iron-spade (khanti) with a short handle used for weeding ahu paddy. The wood and bamboo required for the agricultural implements were locally available except the iron hoe.

As regards the use of iron hoe it has been pointed out by M'Cosh that almost all the kodals (hoe) used in Assam were manufactured by the Khasis. No iron ore was found in Darrang; iron was supplied from Khasi Hills. The Darrangi cultivators purchased kodals or hoe from the Khasis. The latter brought them down along the southern frontier for bartering the produces of the plains. It is said that the iron found in the Khasi Hills was known for its superior quality. The Darrangi blacksmiths or Kamars did not know the technology behind the manufacturing of a hoe. However, other iron implements required for cultivation were made by the local blacksmiths or Kamars.

While the male members tilled the soil with the help of a plough, dragged by a pair of bullocks or buffaloes; the women, who did not take part in the tilling activities, largely assisted and worked in the fields. They were employed in transplanting the paddy seedlings from the nurseries (kathiatoli) to the field. They also assisted in reaping the harvest and gathering mustard and pulses. Thus the women made important contributions to the agricultural economy. Although Hunter mentions that children were not employed in the fieldwork, they were, however, employed in some light and simple duties such as watching the paddy, carrying food for the cultivators working in the field, feeding the bullocks, etc. Thus, the cultivation was a joint effort of the family members.

Besides the family, hired labourers too were employed in agricultural works. There were different systems of labour in the Darrangi society which was also common in other parts of Assam. Among them the system of sauri or mutual co-operation was very common and popular. The cultivators took the help of their neighbours and other fellow cultivators.

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30 W. W. Hunter, op. cit. p. 132; and also B. C. Allen, op. cit., pp. 120-22.
31 John M'Cosh, op. cit. p.58.
34 W. W. Hunter, op. cit. p. 134.
both in sowing and reaping. Women were also employed under this system in the
fieldwork. In this case, the labourers were not given wages, but were served sumptuous
feasts. This labour system based on mutual co-operation greatly helped in achieving
social co-operation and unity.

The rich peasants, who possessed large holdings, employed labour for cultivation both in
the times of sowing and harvesting. They were given wages generally in kind, food and
clothing during this period on a monthly basis. Such labourers were called bheronia or
bhenia.\textsuperscript{35} Another system of labour called marakia was also common in Darrang. There
were poor peasants who possessed land but no bullocks to till their lands. In this case the
poor peasant worked for a certain number of days in ploughing the field of another, and
in return he got the use of the latter’s bullocks for an equal number of days to plough his
land. Hence both mutually benefited under this system. One was able to get free labour
while the other could use the bullocks for free to till his land. In this way the poor
peasants could also cultivate their land. Yet another system of labour known as adhi or
sharing was also very common and popular. There were poor peasants or sharecroppers,
who possessed no land for cultivation. These peasants could work on another’s land and
the produce was divided equally between them. This way the landless peasants too could
get sufficient produce for the maintenance of his family. This system still exists.

Like the people of other parts of Assam, the Darrangis cultivated three varieties of paddy
viz., salidhan, ahudhan and baodhan.\textsuperscript{36} Paddy cultivation was carried on both in rainy
season and in dry season. However, the paddy grown on the moist land in the rainy
season called salidhan (transplanted paddy) was considered more valuable and formed
the main crop.\textsuperscript{37} This salidhan was of two varieties the bardhan and lahidhan.\textsuperscript{38} The
ahu crop was cultivated

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 132.
\textsuperscript{36} B. C. Allen, Assam District Gazetteer, Vol. V. Darrang, 1905, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{37} W. W. Hunter, op. cit., pp. 128-29.
\textsuperscript{38} B. C. Allen, op. cit. p.116.
\textsuperscript{39} Susandai Mishra, Siyala vaisnav Charit, in Bharat Chandra Nath’s Siyala vaisnav Sambatsarar
Kahini, Gautom Printers, Sipajhar, Assam, 1989, verse 438, p. 69.
in three ways. The first or the *dhulian ahu* was sown through broadcast method on the tilled field. The other known as *asara ahu*, in which the germinated seeds were sown, also used the broadcast method. The third method of cultivation was known as *kharma ahu* or transplanted *ahu*, in which the young plants were transplanted under conditions of irrigation. It was extensively practised in the north of Mangaldai especially in the foothill areas where irrigation facilities from the hill streams were available.\(^{40}\) The *baodhan* was cultivated in Darrang to some extent. The *baodhan* was cultivated on comparatively low land where the cultivation of *sali* paddy and *ahu* was not possible owing to the accumulation of water in the rainy season.\(^{41}\) Generally the *baodhan* was sown in the dry season ahead of the *salidhan* but having a longer maturity period was harvested with the *salidhan* crop. The *baodhan* cultivation is still practised in different parts of Darrang like Sipajhar, which is comparatively low-lying.

Paddy cultivation was a long process and had to go through different stages, from sowing to the harvest. The best paddy was selected for seed, which was called *kathia dhan*. This was kept in a receptacle lined with paddy straw called a *tom* or *topa*. At the time of sowing, the *tom* was submerged in water for two or three days in a pond; the *tom* was then taken out of the water but left unopened for two days. Thereafter the *tom* was opened and the *kathia dhan* was taken out from the *tom* and left in a heap on the floor for germination. At this stage it was called *gaja kathia*. The *gaja kathia* was then sown on the well-prepared nursery called *kathiatoli*. After twenty to thirty days when the seedlings grew, it was transplanted from the nursery to the field. These paddy plants were variously named according to the stages of growth; initially it was *kachi roa*, a week later the dark green shoots were known as *sajal dhara roa* and finally when the plants attained full maturity, it was called *mani loa roa*. At this stage the ‘ears of paddy’ began to grow and it was called *gerhoa roa*. Before the ears attained full maturity it was known as *thok* at the next stage the maturing grain was *chauldhara* or *chaulari dhan*. *kal-paka dhan* was the half- ripened stage, and when ripened, *paka dhan*. The reaped sheaf of paddy that was left in the field to dry was called *muthi* or *muthia* and *gachi dhan*.

\(^{40}\) B. C. Allen, *op. cit.* p.117.
When collected into loads each half-load was called a dangari, the whole load being termed as a bhar.

While women carried dangari or half load on their heads, men carried full load or bhar on their shoulders with the help of a hulabari. After reaping the paddy and prior to threshing it is called gachi dhan; and post threshing as guti dhan. One of the two processes was followed in husking. Sijua sukhan dhan was obtained when the paddy was boiled whole till the husk split, then it was spread in a clean place in the yard, and further dried in the sun. It was then husked, and the rice is called paralia ukhua chaul. The husk, called tus or tuh was used for keeping the fire burning for warmth and to keep away wild predators and was a common feature of every household. The other process was used to prepare paralia aroi chaul in which the paddy was dried in the sun only, and then husked in the usual manner. These processes were undertaken almost exclusively by women.

A considerable quantity of paddy was produced in the rajya. There is evidence that the Darrangi Rajas had supplied grain to Captain Welsh and promised to furnish him in future with any quantity of grain that he might require. It appears that the people did not feel the wants of food grains.

People could feed themselves and maintained their family through paddy cultivation. However, wild animals and flood occasionally destroyed the cultivation especially in the chapari areas. Mustard was cultivated extensively in Darrang. It was done on highlands especially in the chapari areas. These chapari were not suitable for wet-paddy cultivation due to floods during the rainy season. Therefore, in these areas, cultivation of mustard and different kinds of pulses was undertaken in dry season. These were generally sown in October and November and gathered in February-March. It was of two kinds, i.e. sewa behar (white mustard) and jati behar (black mustard). Mustard or behar was an essential crop used by people of all classes. Mustard oil, called mitha tel was prepared from the extract of the seeds by pressing it with a sal or contrivance locally made. There were two types of sal i.e. gash sal and septi sal. Both men and women were engaged in this

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process. The oil was used for cooking and lighting purposes in households. A special
dish prepared from mustard called *batangura* or *behargura* was also popular. **Darrang produced large quantities of mustard** of which a small portion was internally consumed and the surplus was exported. It was one of the chief articles of export from the region.\(^5\) Hamilton recorded that 15,000 *maunds* of mustard were exported from Assam annually in the first decade of nineteenth century.\(^6\) It is presumed that of the exported amount, mustard from Darrang must have been considerable. **In this way, even this small rajya also became integrated into the world market.**

Sugarcane was another important crop of cultivation in the *Darrangi Rajya*. The places associated with the cultivation of sugarcane were called *kuhiarani*. That the cultivation of sugarcane was done extensively in the *Darrangi Rajya* is evident from the fact that Gobinda Atai, the founder of the Khatara Satra accompanied by some local inhabitants known as *Khats*, hunted wild animals in the *kuhiarani*.\(^7\) An indigenous contrivance locally made called *kuhiar sal* extracted the juice of the sugarcane. It had two wooden rollers fixed closely side by side between two wooden blocks. One of the two rollers was loosely fixed to both the upper and lower block so that it revolved very smoothly. The top of the other roller was allowed to pass through a hole of the upper block and it was fixed to one end of a long bamboo in such a way that the rollers revolved smoothly when the other end of the bamboo was pushed this way or that way. The roller having the longer neck was known as *mota bhim* and the other roller was known as *maiki bhim*.

Under the lower block a trough was fixed where the juice of the crush sugarcane fell. From that trough the juice went to an earthen vessel which was usually placed in an indentation on ground. The long bamboo attached to the *mota bhim* was pushed by cows or buffaloes. Just below the bamboo a man sat beside the two rollers and he pushed three or four sugarcane sticks into the pit of the revolving rollers, and the rollers carried the canes forward by crushing them with the threads designed for the purpose. After using


the same sugarcane three or four times the juice ceased to drop and only foam appeared. Then fresh sugarcane was used. The juice trickled from the trough into the earthen vessel already fixed below and then it was transferred to a small boat-shaped container scooped out of a log. After collecting twelve to fifteen gallon of such juice the process of boiling began. The furnace for this purpose was located close and it was also hollowed out of the ground. A large cauldron was placed on it which was made of a durable kind of potter's clay. Two or three other vessels were placed about nine feet from the furnace mouth so that the prepared molasses could be poured into them. The ladle which was used for taking out the prepared molasses from the cauldron was known as gholani. The liquid was stirred till it lost its dark brown colour until it assumed the hue of yellow mud. After it cooled down it was stored in earthen pots. In this way people of the Darrangi Rajya manufactured chura (liquid molasses) and guda (molasses). These processes were mainly done by the men. The cane was planted in April and the harvest reaped in February. Hamilton observes that the sugarcane was also eaten fresh. Fibrous plants, like jute or marapat were also cultivated. Rope for cattle was generally prepared from jute.

The Darrangi cultivators cultivated different variety of pulses for internal consumption. Pulses such as mati mah, magu mah, kala mah, bakala mah or barkala mah, masur mah were commonly cultivated. Kala or kalai mah was one of the chief products of Darrang. Besides this, rahar and other variety such as bejia mah, lechara mah, urahi, bangala mah were also cultivated. The places associated with the cultivation of pulses were known as mahtoli. Cultivation of different kinds of spices was known to the Darrangi cultivators. Black pepper called Jaluk was one of the important products of the Darrangi Rajya. The Darrangi cultivators produced a considerable quantity of black pepper for internal consumption. Places associated with the cultivation of black pepper were often called Jalukbari. In fact there is a place near Tangla Railway station called Jalukbari. Ginger (ada), garlic (naharu), onion (piaj), turmeric (haldhi) were also produced. Tezpat

49 John M'Cosh, op. cit. p.29.
50 Francis Hamilton, op. cit. p.61.
51 Sarbeswar Rajguru, op. cit. p. 269.
54 Dineswar Sarma, op. cit. p. 23.
(bay leaf) was also grown. Narayandev referred to the cultivation of brinjal for internal consumption. Yam or kath alu was commonly cultivated. The Doli Puran referred to the fact that the kath alu became so large that two men could barely carry it.

Each and every family had a kitchen garden, which was grown and tended mainly by women. Different kinds of green vegetables like lai, lapha, chukka, paleng, etc., were commonly cultivated for internal consumption. According to the Padma Puran different fruit-bearing trees were cultivated all over the Darrangi Rajya. The early records mention kantaphal (jack fruit), amra (mango), jambu (eugenia jambolana), sriphal, deombari (fig), sakhtoka, akhrut (walnut), baderi (jujube), lakuca, amalaka, betasa (gamboze), puga (betel nut), coraka (a kind of wild palm tree), rudraska (bead tree) and many sour fruits, such as au (dillenis indica), tenteli and others. The medieval literature also referred to the abundance of these fruits. Sukabi Narayandev mentioned different kinds of fruits in his famous Padma Puran. He gave a vivid description of gardening. It is said that the merchant prince Chandu Sadagar, the hero of Padma Puran, had pioneered a model kitchen garden in which he formed a blue-print for planting of various plants, trees herbs and vegetables in a systematic and organized manner. He advocated the use of an in-built mechanism for the protection of the garden by providing a three tier ring of ramparts reinforced by bamboos, madder and thekera (gamboza tree) thereby making to inaccessible to intruders. Separate plots were marked out for citrus fruits, plants, mango, jackfruit, bakula, haritaki and many other fruit-bearing trees. Various leafy vegetables, arum, brinjal or eggplants, ginger and turmeric were cultivated in the vegetable garden. By digging a pond in the middle of the garden flowers like champa, yuthika, malati, ketaki, nageswar, mallika, java, gandharaja, etc., were planted. Apart from all theses rows of coconut trees too were planted in the garden.

56 Dineswar Sarma, op. cit. p. 23.
58 Dineswer Sarma, op. cit. p.23.
59 P. C. Choudhury, op. cit, p. 335.
Reference of plantain or banana is also found in the *Padma Puran*. Banana was commonly cultivated for fruit and the stems were burnt to ashes and used as *kalakhar* (alkali) which was a salt-substitute and a rarity in the *rajya*. Shihabuddin Talish observed that some of the people of this country cut up the plants and dried them in the sun and then burnt it. They then tied the ashes in a piece of fine cloth which was tied to four posts fixed in the ground, a pot was placed underneath it and water was gradually sprinkled on the cloth. The drippings, which are extremely blackish and bitter was a substitute for salt. The banana tree was also used as *bhur* (a kind of float). There were many varieties of plantain of which *athia, monohar, chenichampa,* and *malbhog* were important and commonly cultivated. The *athia* variety was especially used as baby-food. In those days banana formed an article of lucrative trade as indicated by the *Padma Puran*. Plantation of oranges was common in Assam. It was extensively cultivated in the *Darrangi Rajya*. The places associated with the cultivation of orange were known as Tengakhat or Tengabari. There were several places in the *rajya* bearing the name Tengabari, which clearly proved that the *Darrangi Rajas* paid much attention to its cultivation. An orange-orchard can be still seen in the garden of the erstwhile royals at Houli Mohanpur.

Betel-nut (areca catechu) and betel-leaf were cultivated extensively. Each and every family had a garden of betel-nut and betel-leaf. The cultivation of tobacco was also done extensively in the *Darrangi Rajya*, which was in great demand particularly in the Mughal territory. There is evidence that Ratan Shah, a Bengal merchant purchased tobacco leaves (*dhowapat*) near Singari in the *Darrangi Rajya*. Thus, tobacco formed an important article of export. An intoxicant herb, *bhang* was grown in abundance. This is indicated by the fact that when Surya Narayan came back from the Ahom capital to Mangaldai accompanied by about 80 men delegated by the Ahom king to prepare the

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63 B.C.Allen, op. cit., p. 126.
64 Sukabi Narayandev, op. cit., verse 194, p. 44.
65 Francis Hamilton, op. cit. p.61.
intoxicating herb (bhang) for him.\textsuperscript{67} Thus, the cultivators produced almost everything needed for their own consumption. They became self-sufficient in agricultural products.

Besides agriculture, \textbf{the people of Darrang also engaged in crafts and industries.} The craftsmen of the old kingdom of Kamrupa had a place in ancient India in the development of various industrial products whether in the art of weaving and sericulture, and working in the metal, ivory, wood, leather, clay, cane, bamboo, etc., and their reputation was equal to that of the craftsmen of other parts of contemporary India.\textsuperscript{68} Darrang being a part of the old Kamrupa kingdom shared that glory and reputation of the time. Literature mentions several professional groups of the \textit{Darrangi Rajya} of the period under review. For instance, the \textit{Darranga Rajvansaali} and \textit{Hatibarua Vansaali} mention several professional groups such as \textit{Tanti} (weaver), \textit{Sonari} (goldsmith), \textit{Kumar} (potter), \textit{Teli} (oil presser), \textit{Mali} (gardener), \textit{Dhoba} (washerman), \textit{Barhai} (carpenter), \textit{Kamar} (blacksmith), \textit{Kahar} (bell-metal worker), \textit{Chamar} (shoe-maker), etc.\textsuperscript{69} This shows the various craft and industrial activities engaged in the \textit{Darrangi Rajya}, which brought in material prosperity of the \textit{rajya}.

There are ample references in the literature and inscriptions to the development of the weaving industry in Darrang. The \textit{Darrangi Raja}, Dhwaja Narayan donated various clothes along with other articles to the Khatara Satra, which was recorded by the \textit{Barkakat} preserved in the \textit{satra}.\textsuperscript{70} There was a special class called \textit{tanti} who mainly dealt with the weaving and supplied clothes to the royal family. The centres of the \textit{Tantis} or weavers were known as \textit{Tanti Chuba}. However, weaving was a common feature of every household and the common people adopted weaving to produce their own garments. The women were mainly engaged in the weaving industry. It was believed that if a woman was ignorant in the art of weaving she could acquire the expertise if she offered milk, \textit{chura} (liquid molasses), \textit{ghee}, honey, etc., to the Khatara Satra. She had to offer the first

\textsuperscript{68} P. C. Choudhury, op. cit. p.338.

-79-
cloth she wove to the satra. This tradition is prevalent even today in that region. It shows clearly that weaving was a mandatory practice of the Darrangi women.

There were three principal varieties of silk manufactured i.e. pat, muga and endi or eri. The pat was of the finest and costliest quality, which was much more expensive than muga and was used only by economically and socially upper classes among the natives. The muga was a stouter and more durable fabric than the pat. The muga, which was considered rich and valuable also provided the dress of the wealthier class, and was the prescribed attire of all the high officers of government. The endi or eri was of the coarsest quality of all, and was used by the poor or low rank. The manufacture of silk was carried on without capital, without division of labour, by single individuals, each of whom spun, wove and dyed her yarn. All of these silks were woven at leisure hours by the women of the family, after completion of all household chores and child-rearing. A considerable quantity of silk was produced in Darrang and it constituted a major article of export and lucrative trade. As recorded by Mills, muga and pat were two of the chief products of Darrang.

Darrang was rich in the industry of pat or silk. The patpalu or silkworm was fed with the leaves of nuni or neskuri (mulberry) tree locally available. It is significant to note that the Jogi or Katani people introduced the art of patpalu rearing in the Darrangi Rajya. The rearing of patpalu was the monopoly of the Jogi community, who were experts in this art. It was reared entirely in-doors away from the people of other castes. This shows that

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73 John M'Cosh, op. cit. p. 31.
75 John M'Cosh, op. cit. p. 31.
77 John M'Cosh, op. cit. p. 31.
78 A. J. M. Mills, op. cit. p. 399. The cultivation of patpalu or silkworm became so lucrative that after the occupation of the Rajya by the British, David Scott, the Governor General's Agent, established a silkworm farm in the division of Desh Darrang, and planted almost 12 acres of land with the mulberry plant. Assam Secretariat Proceedings. Judicial and Revenue Administration, Assam, 1835 A.D File No. 298. Bengal. State Archives, Dispur, Guwahati.
caste-distinction was clearly prevalent. The Jogi (Katani) people supplied *pat* or silk cloth to the Darrangi Rajas. Tanti Chuba of village Hatimuria under Sipajhar circle was famous for *pat* industry. Pat too was an important article of export. The rearing of *patpulu* was carried on throughout the year and up to seven cocoons were produced in a year. The duration of its maturity varied according to the seasons. In summer it was shorter needing about forty-three days, which in winter needed nearly two months.

Pottery making was an important craft of the Darrangi Rajya. Specimens of ancient pottery of Darrang are available in plenty proving as it was extensively used. Pottery-making was carried on by both the Kumars and the Hiras. Women were largely employed in making pottery. Reference of Kumars and Hiras are found in the Darranga Rajvansaali. The chief articles manufactured by the potters were cooking pots like akathia and khola, daskathia, charu and satar, water jars like kalah and tekeli, vessels called thali in which rice was boiled, and large vessels called *haris* and *jaka*, etc.

The villages inhabited by the Kumars and the Hiras were called Kumarpara and Hirapara respectively. There are still many villages in Darrang district bearing the names Kumarpara and Hirapara, which proves the wide prevalence of the craft of pottery. The chief centres of the craft were at Tezpur, Chutia, Bishawanath, Becheria and Haleswar and Salmara. Besides, Basgora, on the Barnadi river, a few miles north of Kuruaghat, was a seat of pottery manufacture and catered to an extensive local demand. The Darrangi people also knew the art of brick-manufacture although it was not commonly used. The dwelling houses of the rajas as well as the subjects were not made of bricks; but built of reeds, bamboo and wood. Thus the rajas lived like the common people, and this induced a sense of equality and social justice. The bricks were especially used in

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81 W. W. Hunter, op. cit. p. 139.
82 B. C. Allen, op. cit p. 158.
83 W. W. Hunter, op. cit. p. 141.
making of temples. Such bricks were made by the Kumars, which is referred to by the Darranga Rajvansaali.84

The Darranga Rajvansaali mentions a professional group called Barhai (carpenter). The work of Barhai or carpentry was carried on by the Kalitas and the people of other castes too. They made boats and canoes85 and different kinds of furniture. M'Cosh commented, "a boat is as common to every house, as a brass lota or an earthen pot."86 The Darrangi people largely depended on boats for transport and communication. The Barhai made different kinds of boats87 used in the Darrangi Rajya. Besides, different kinds of furniture used in the households were made by these Barhai. Moreover, they made some other articles of common use such as dheki for husking rice, loom for weaving, nangal for ploughing, and dola, etc. Along with woodcraft, bamboo and cane works too were carried out by people of all castes.88 These people largely depended on bamboo and cane works.

The use of different kinds of metal such as gold, brass, silver, iron, etc., is mentioned in the Darranga Rajvansaali.89 The craftsmen who carried on gold smithy were called Sonari (goldsmith). As observed by Francis Hamilton, the gold smiths were mostly of Kalita caste.90 But there were no restrictions on other caste people in carrying on this craft. The goldsmiths made different kinds of ornaments. Blacksmiths or Kamars were mostly Kalitas and Koches.91 Literature like the Darranga Rajvansaali and the Hatibarua Vansaali refer to Kamars or blacksmiths. The presence of villages called Kamarpara indicates the wide prevalence of blacksmithy in the Darrangi Rajya. The Kamars made different kinds of iron implements needed for agriculture and household. They also made

84 Suryakhadi Daibajyan, op. cit., verse, 544, p. 103. Kumara aniya ita sajibeka dil / Pagiya ita ghitat vajila // Karal pagiya punu vajila sabadhane / Mrinmoy moth tobe karila nirman // -literally translated as the Kumar was ordered to make bricks who made bricks by frying it in ghee and constructed temple with it.
85 Francis Hamilton, op. cit. p. 62.
86 John M'Cosh, op. cit. p. 28.
87 Different kinds of boats were known to the Darrangi people such as chara nao, olagi nao, bhari nao, mar nao, basaru nao, kocha nao, gerap nao, arhaikuria nao, dukuria nao, bajara nao, petola nao, bar nao, dinga, par nao, bhatia nao, garhna nao, etc. - Ram Chandra Deka and Prasanna Kumar Nath (eds.), Saranga Saurav, Printmatics, Mangaldai, Assam, 2005, p. 21
88 Francis Hamilton, op. cit. p. 63.
89 Suryakhadi Daibajyan, op. cit. verses 252-69, pp. 47-49.
90 Suryakhadi Daibajyan, op. cit. p. 62.
91 Ibid. p. 62.
different types of war weapons like *tarwals*, spears, and iron-head of arrows, etc. Brass industry also developed in the *Darrangi Rajya*. The *Morias* exclusively carried on this craft. It has already been mentioned that Houli Mohanpur and Banglagarh were the seats of considerable *Moria* inhabitants and brass making industry. They made necessary utensils needed for the royal families and the subjects. The surplus was taken to Udalguri for sale to the hill tribes particularly the Bhutanese.

The people of Darrang also engaged in trade and commerce, which had a deep impact on the economy and the society of the *rajya*. The geographical location, natural resources, agricultural, craft and industrial products, and the extensive route and communication system of the *rajya* led to the growth of trade and commerce, both internal and external. The mountain passes (*duars*), the rivers, and the land routes were the main routes of communication used by the people for different purposes since remote past. All these routes were also used for commercial and other purposes during the period of study. This is a known fact that there were numerous mountain passes in the north of Assam leading to Tibet, China, Afghanistan and the west through Bhutan and Nepal. The *Tabaquat-i-Nasiri* mentions that there were as many as thirty-five passes between Assam and Tibet. The route to Tibet runs across the Himalayan mountains parallel to the course of the Brahmaputra. The *Periplus* pointed out as early as the first century A.D. that the merchants from Lhasa went to China and bought back various goods for sale to Assam traders and hence to the *Darrangi* traders. Lieutenant Ruderford states that the Khampa Bhutias or Lhasa merchants, just before the Burmese invasion, had unreserved commercial intercourse with Assam.

The hill tribes of the north, especially the Bhutanese, kept up their intercourse with the plains through the *duars* like Kariapara Duar, Burhigoma Duar, Khalling Duar, etc.

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92 Dineswar Sarma, op. cit. p. 102.
93 W. W. Hunter, op. cit. p. 141.
95 Ibid, p. 113.
96 B. K. Barua, op. cit. p. 115.
97 P. C. Choudhury, op. cit. p. 335.
98 B. K. Barua, op. cit. p. 115.
However, the management of the duars was surrendered to the Bhutanese in consideration of an annual tribute consisting of yak tails, ponies, musk, gold-dust, blankets and daggers.\textsuperscript{100} All the Assamese trade with Tibet passed through the Kariapara Duar at a place called Chouna, a two-month journey from Lhasa; and in the first decade of the nineteenth century it amounted in value to about two lakh of rupees per year. The Assamese merchants including those from Darrang used to be stationed with their commodities at Geegunsheer about four miles from Chouna.\textsuperscript{101} The trade route with Bhutan and Tibet through Udalguri in Darrang district continued to be in use even after the fall of the \textit{Darrangi Rajya}.\textsuperscript{102}

As most of the parts of the \textit{Darrangi Rajya} were covered by forests which were full of wild animals like tiger, elephant, buffalo, bear, etc., in those days the water ways were preferred to the land ways for the purpose of general communications and trade. Moreover, waterways were easier and cheaper communication. Narayandev mentions that Chandu Sadagar of Champak Nagar of modern Chaigaon of Kamrup district used waterways for trade with Ujani Nagar at the foothills of Darrang. So also Ratan Shah, a Bengal merchant, traded with Darrang and advanced as far as Belsiri near Singari with his two \textit{patola nao}.\textsuperscript{103} As William Robinson observed, the intercourse between Assam and Bengal was almost entirely maintained by water. There was a free communication between the Brahmaputra and the Ganges, and boats of large size passed throughout the year.\textsuperscript{104} No doubt, water communication played a major role in the trade and commerce of the \textit{Darrangi Rajya}. The principal river Brahmaputra and its tributaries provided ample facilities for water communication. The Brahmaputra, which formed the southern boundary of the \textit{raiya} flowed from the east to the west throughout the \textit{raiya}. It formed the highway through which communications with other parts of Assam and India could be established. It was navigable by large-size indigenous boats throughout the year. The other rivers, originating in the mountains of the north, were all tributaries of the Brahmaputra. They flowed in the southern direction where they joined the mainstream.

\textsuperscript{100} S. K. Bhuyan, \textit{Anglo-Assamese Relations (1771-1826)}, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974, p.34.
\textsuperscript{101} John M'Cosh, op. cit. p. 66.
\textsuperscript{104} William Robinson, \textit{A Descriptive Account of Assam}, Sanskaran Prakash, Delhi, India, 1975, p. 245.
The most important tributaries were Bhareli (Bhairabi), Ghiladhari, Jia Dhansiri (Dhaneswari), Nanoi, and Barnadi. They were all navigable by indigenous trading boats of a hundred mounds, throughout the year. There were about twenty-six other small rivers and streams, navigable by indigenous boats of fifty mounds or two tons, during the summer.\textsuperscript{105} Thus, there was every facility for movement throughout the rajya by waterway. There were some special ghats (ports) on the banks of the rivers for anchoring the boats. These ghats were also used for drawing water.\textsuperscript{106} Some important ghats were Kuruaghat,\textsuperscript{107} Barnadighat, Rangamatighat, Deodhanighat, Dalángghat, Dhansirighat, Patharughat, Kharupetiaghat,\textsuperscript{108} etc. These ghats were connected to the villages with roads. Therefore, the merchandise easily reached the villages and vice versa.

Besides, there were several roads in the Darrangi Rajya, which provided facilities for internal communication and trade. Among the roads that existed in the rajya, the Gohain Kamal Ali was important one. It was primarily a military causeway constructed by Gohain Kamal under orders of the Koch king Nar Narayan,\textsuperscript{109} which extended along the foot hills of north from Koch Behar (West Bengal) to Narayanpur (in the district of Lakhimpur)\textsuperscript{110} and was about 360 miles in length.\textsuperscript{111} This road was about fifteen-feet broad and about eight feet high.\textsuperscript{112} This was an important road by which the Darrangi Rajya was linked to the countries of the west and the east. The next important road was known as Bongal Ali or Bengal Ali (Ally), which passed through the Darrangi Rajya (Durrung) from the north-east to the south-west, and joined the Brahmaputra nearly opposite Gauhati. It is reported that the road was constructed by Mir Jumla, the Mughal invader.\textsuperscript{113} It was probably the royal road (Raj Ali) as mentioned in the Sylalavaishnav Charit.\textsuperscript{114} Besides, the Darrangi Rajas constructed different roads at different times in

\textsuperscript{105} W. W. Hunter, op. cit. pp. 104 – 5.
\textsuperscript{106} Susandai Mishra, op. cit. verse, 372, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{107} W. W. Hunter, op. cit. p. 135.
\textsuperscript{109} Suryakhadi Daibajyan, op. cit. verse 319, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{111} K. L. Barua, op. cit. p. 196.
\textsuperscript{112} John M'Cosh, op. cit. p. 69.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Susandai Mishra, op. cit., verse, 250, p. 40.
the rajya. It is said that when Dharma Narayan shifted his capital from Kherkheria to Mohanpur a road was formed from the former to the latter. It became the main link road with the northern part of the rajya in the subsequent periods. He also constructed some other link roads connecting the villages with the capital.115

Other important cross roads as observed by W. W. Hunter included the roads that ran westward from Orang (Aurang) to Udalguri of about 14½ miles length. Further west from Udalguri to Bengbari near Panery there was a road of about 9 miles length. From Udalguri, another road led northwards to the interior of the Bhutan Hills, and the Bhutanese used to come down to attend the Udalguri annual fair by this road. There was another road from Udalguri to Bhairabkunda, at the foot of the Bhutan Hills and thence to Amrantal of Bhutan. From Bengbari there was a road, which ran via Kalaigaon to Mangaldai and Rangamati, on the banks of the Brahmaputra, a distance of 25 miles.116 An elephant path skirts the base of the Bhutan Hills from the Barnadi river in the west of the Darrangi Rajya to the Moramornoi river in Lakhimpur. This path was known as hatipati or elephant hunter's tract. There was a road, viz. Kabu Ali, in the southern boundary of the Kariapara Duar.117 Thus this extensive system of roads and communications opened the rajya for free growth of trade and commerce, internal and external.

Boats were the main means of transport for carrying merchandise both in internal and external trade. Animals like elephants, buffaloes, bullocks, horses, etc., were also employed for carrying merchandise and general transportation in the areas where navigation was not possible especially in the mountain tracts. Horses were not found in the forests of Darrang, but largely used in transportation of merchandise and in wars118 and the requisite horses were procured from Bhutan. The Bhutan pony was known as tatuk. The Ghora Nidan refers to another kind of horse, which was known as turuki of

116 The tea planters extensively used this road during the British rule.
118 Raja Dharma Narayan fought against Bhutan mounting on his horse. - J. P. Wade, op. cit., p. 240.
Turkey.\textsuperscript{119} It indicates that horses were also supplied from Turkey. There was no wheeled carriage of any description as attested by both Captain F. Jenkins, commissioner of Assam, in 1835 A.D. and Mills in 1853 A.D. respectively.\textsuperscript{120} In many cases goods were carried on men's shoulders. In this regard the \textit{Kacharis} were competent enough.

Darrang was a place of trade and commerce. It is mentioned in the \textit{Padma Puran} that Sahe Raja's city was Ujani Nagar. Scholars like Dineswar Sarma are of the opinion that Ujani Nagar was located in the northern part of the \textit{Darrangi Rajya} and the areas comprising of Harisinga and Ambagaon was known as Ujani.\textsuperscript{121} Chandu Sadagar was of Champak Nagar (city), modern Chaigaon in Kamrup district. Both Sahe Raja and Chandu Sadagar were rulers and traders. Chandu used waterways and established commercial relations with Sahe Raja of Ujani Nagar.\textsuperscript{122} It emphasized the commercial importance of the region. During the time of the \textit{Darrangi Rajas} several trade fairs were held at different places of the \textit{rajya} especially at the foothills in the North. One such important annual trade fair was held at Udalguri in the North West of the \textit{rajya} near Bhutan frontiers, in February or March. It was attended largely by Bhutias, Tibetans (Thibetans) and Khamti, as well as by the people of all the surrounding areas of Assam, and by few Manipuris.\textsuperscript{123} In this trade fair a huge number of traders from the above mentioned areas gathered of which some were dressed as Chinese and some of them came with their families. They carried their merchandise on horseback and several hundreds of such pack horses were brought down annually to the Udalguri trade fair.\textsuperscript{124} This indicates the volume and importance of the Udalguri trade fair. A similar trade fair was held at Kherkheria, at the foot of the Bhutan Hills, near the Lakhminadi (river), where Bhutanese

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ghora Nidan}, translated and edited by Tarini Charan Bhattacharjee, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1932, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Assam Secretariat Proceedings, Report on the Judicial and revenue Administration of Assam, 1835 A.D. File No. 298, Bengal}, State Archives, Dispur, Guwahati; and also A. J. M. Mills, op. cit, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{121} Dineswar Sarma, op. cit. p. 16.

\textsuperscript{122} To make this commercial relation permanent they had to establish matrimonial alliances. Thus, Beula, the daughter of Sahe Raja was married to Lakhindhar the son of Chandu Sadagar.

\textsuperscript{123} W.W. Hunter, op. cit. p.143. The importance of the trade fair of Udalguri was not lessening during the British period. It is evident that with a view of fostering commercial intercourse with the mountaineers, and further developing the fair at Udalguri (Oodalguree) and resources of the Charduar forest, Captain Rynolds proposed to expend the sum of rupees 8,200 in constructing a road between Tezpur and Udalguri. A. J. M. Mills, op. cit. p.421.

and the people from the *Darrangi Rajya* as well as surrounding areas of Assam, participated.\(^{125}\) There was another important trading *chowki* at the village Gorakuchi near Singari in Darrang, where Bengal merchants traded with the Bhutanese and the Daflas.\(^{126}\)

An important annual trade fair was held at *Silpota or Seelpota (Leelpota)* in Chatguri Duar during the *Bohog Bihu (Barbihu)* festival, where the *Kacharis* of the *rajya* as well as the Bhutanese participated. The Bhutias (Bhutanese) brought down different kinds of hill products such as gold, rock-salt, musk, ponies, woolens, cloths, yak tails, blankets and China silk. They bartered these articles for the plain products such as rice, broad cloths, liquor and dried fish, etc.\(^{127}\) During the *Bohog Bihu (Barbihu)* festival, throughout the south-west portion of the *Darrangi Rajya*, and especially in *mahal* Desh Darrang fairs were held at different places like Banglagarh (Bangalgarh), Rangamati, Harinkhoja, Hindughopa, Sipajhar and Chopara, etc.\(^{128}\) Local people mainly attended these fairs and exchanged their goods. A fair was also held at Jagannath Than at Majikuch, on the border of Kamrup district in the month of December for at least three days.\(^{129}\) All these commercial prospects made the *rajya* an emporium, which attracted the traders from hill countries of the North as well as Bengal. This commercial contact between the *Darrangis* and the outside people had a deep impact on the economy and culture of the *Darrangi Rajya*.

Wazeer Barua, who resided at Symlabarrea in the Darrang-Bhutan frontier, a day's journey north of the capital of the *Darrangi Rajas* conducted the trade with Bhutan. He was the sole agent employed by the Bhutanese and the Assamese in their mutual exchange or purchase of goods. He levied no duties, but accepted presents from the traders.\(^{130}\) Wazeer Barua was an Ahom officer which implies that the *Darrangi* trade

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\(^{125}\) W. W. Hunter, op. cit., p. 144.

\(^{126}\) *Kamarupar Buranjii*, S. K. Bhuyan (ed.), pp.44 and 49.


\(^{128}\) W.W. Hunter, op. cit. p.145.

\(^{129}\) Ibid. p. 146.

with Bhutan was controlled by the Ahom Kings. However, during the rule of Raja Krishna Narayan the control of the Bhutan trade was entrusted to the Darrangi Rajas. This marks a change in the status of the Darrangi Rajas. The importance of the Darrangi trade with the Bhutanese can be understood from the agreement concluded between Krishna Narayan, the Darrangi Raja and the Ahom king. He had to pay rupees 3,000 to the Ahoms in lieu of custom duties on the trade between Darrang and Bhutan.\textsuperscript{131} The trade with Bhutan was carried on by way of barter.\textsuperscript{132} The Bhutanese bought down their hill products and bartered them for the products of plains. In the Assam-Bhutan trade there was annual transaction worth of one lakh rupees.\textsuperscript{133} It gradually increased and in 1809 A.D. this trade between Bhutan and Assam is reported to have amounted to two lakh of rupees per annum.\textsuperscript{134} In the year just before the Burmese invasion in the second decade of the nineteenth century, the Khampa Bhutia or Lassa traders brought down gold whose value alone amounted to about seventy thousand rupees.\textsuperscript{135} This indicated the volume and importance of the trade with the hill people. Thus the Darrangis trade with Bhutan gradually expanded and had an important impact on the economy of the raja.

The Bengal traders carried on their trade with the Darrangi Rajya through the waterways and proceeded as far as Singari. Some of the goods of Darrang especially different kinds of pulses, mustard, tobacco, agaru or aloe wood, etc., had high demand in the Mughal India.\textsuperscript{136} Although their entry to the rajya was restricted, they acquired these goods through smuggling. The Bengal merchants had good knowledge of the Darrangi Rajya and some of them had taken asylum in the rajya. For example, Harisen fled from Bengal and took asylum in Darrang.\textsuperscript{137} Kuruaghat on the north bank of the Brahmaputra in the south west corner of the Darrangi Rajya was an important port through which the Bengal merchants transacted their business with the rajya. The people of the Darrangi Rajya basically depended on Bengal for salt. The Assam trade with Bengal was regulated at

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{131} Edward Gait, op. cit. footnote, p. 196.
  \item \textsuperscript{132} S. K. Bhuyan, \textit{Anglo-Assamese Relations (1771-1826)}, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974, p. 80.
  \item \textsuperscript{133} Hiteswar Barbarua, \textit{Ahom Din}, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 1997, p. 552.
  \item \textsuperscript{134} R. B. Pemberton, op. cit. p. 83.
  \item \textsuperscript{135} Alexander Mackenzie, \textit{The North East Frontier of India}, Mittal Publicgations, New Delhi, India, 2001, p. 15.
\end{itemize}
Hadira Chawki or Kandahar nearly opposite of Goalpara which was known as Bangalhat. According to Sarbananda Rajkumar, this Hadira Chawki was established in the last part of the eighteen century. An Ahom officer called Barua was in-charge of the Assam-Bengal trade. All the trade between Assam and Bengal passed through his hands. The Barua levied duties on exports and imports. Generally the amount of duties was ten percent and he annually paid 45,000 rupees to the Ahom king. No separate statistics for the export and imports of the Darrangi Rajya to Bengal is available during the period under review. However, an idea can be formed from the statistics of imports and exports between Assam and Bengal in 1809 A. D. as given by Hamilton which is shown in Table No. 1 and Table No. 2.

Table No. 1: Imports of Assam from Bengal in 1809 A. D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of article</th>
<th>Quantity of article</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Total value Rs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>35,000 mound</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>1,92,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghee</td>
<td>1,000 mound</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Pulse</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone Beads</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coral</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewels and Pearls</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutlery and glass-ware (European)</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paints</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Lead</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English woolens</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tafetas</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benares Kinkhap</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stain</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold &amp;Silver cloth</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shells</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslin</td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total value of imports was Rs. 2,28,300.

140 Francis Hamilton, op. cit., 44.
141 Ibid., p. 48
Table No. 2: Exports of Assam to Bengal in 1809 A. D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Article</th>
<th>Quantity of article</th>
<th>Average mound Rs.</th>
<th>Total amount Rs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stick Lac</td>
<td>10,000 mound</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muga silk</td>
<td>65 mound</td>
<td>147.61</td>
<td>11,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muga cloth</td>
<td>75 mound</td>
<td>233.33</td>
<td>17,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munjit (Indian madder)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black pepper</td>
<td>50 mound</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long pepper</td>
<td>50 mound</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton (with seed)</td>
<td>7000 mound</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell-metal vessels</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustard</td>
<td>15,000 mound</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron hoe</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaves</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaikol fruit</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total value of export was 1,30,900

Of the imports and exports represented in the two tables above, it may be mentioned that the Darrangi Rajya had a considerable share in the trade.

Although there were great prospects for the extension of external trade, the administration made no provisions for its development. The foreign traders were not encouraged to settle in the rajya or carry on trade in the interior areas for want of security of the state. In fact, they were only permitted to carry on trade under strict supervision. The Darrangi Rajas distrusted the foreigners, who might make trouble. That was why trade fairs were basically held in the frontier areas. The outside merchants were not allowed to come down frequently, only periodical exchanges were allowed. The Mughal merchants were not permitted to carry on trade in the interior areas. Therefore, they developed the practice of smuggling. Further, the government did not have any intention of earning revenue through extension of external trade, and hence surplus production was not encouraged. The self-sufficient village economy had also limited the scope of the business. They produced whatever they needed, except for salt, which was basically...
procured from Bengal. Although some items like *pat*, *muga*, mustard, etc., had high demand in the foreign countries, production was not commercialized.

The absence of a specific trading community also limited the volume of business. Due to limited coinage, the trade was carried on chiefly by barter system or mutual exchange. Nevertheless, trade, both internal and external, flourished and became linked with the world market. The commercial intercourse increased their knowledge about the surrounding as well as distant regions. Many external elements were found incorporated into the *Darrangi* art and culture especially in the *Ojhapali* institution.

Revenue was realized through personal labour, products and presents. Land tax was the chief source of revenue of the government. The revenue system of the *Darrangi Rajya* resembled more or less with the Ahom system, which was based on the *paik* system.\(^\text{142}\)

Reference to *paik* is also found in the *Padma Puran*. The subjects did not pay land tax in cash, but enrolled themselves in the *paik* class and worked in the royal house. In return they received two *pura* of tax-free arable land, known as *ga-matee* (body land), which was considered neither hereditary nor transferable by sale, gift or bequest. In addition to this they received *bari* or *bakara* land (high land) for homestead. This was a tax-free land and considered hereditary property of the *paik*, which could be sold or gifted. It was never surveyed and registered.\(^\text{143}\)

Those *paiks* exempted from active service known as *chamua paik* paid tax. The *paiks* had to pay another tax called hearth tax or *chooroo kar*, which was calculated on the quantity of rice land that the *paiks* cultivated. This tax was imposed on additional lands received by the *paiks* in addition to their original quota of land or *ga-matee*. They had to pay eight *annas* up to two *puras* of land and one rupee above two *puras*.\(^\text{144}\)

The high caste people such as Brahman and *Daibajyan* were excluded from working as *paik*.\(^\text{145}\) The officers were not paid salaries in cash;\(^\text{146}\) instead

\(^{142}\) Under this system the adult male population had to do compulsory service to the state. There were two kinds of *paik* i.e. *kari paik* and *chamua paik.*

\(^{143}\) *Assam Secretariat Proceedings: Report on the Judicial and Revenue Administration of Assam, 1835 A.D. File No. 298. Bengal, State Archives, Dispur, Guwahati; and also W. W. Hunter, op. cit. p. 130.*

\(^{144}\) *Assam Secretariat Proceedings: Report on the Judicial and Revenue Administration of Assam, 1835 A.D. File No. 298. Bengal, State Archives, Dispur, Guwahati.*


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they received certain number of *paiks* and estate for their maintenance. The *rajas* granted tax-free land known as *debottar* and *brahmottor* to the religious institutions, Brahmans and the learned. For example, *rajas* granted *debottar* land to the Rudreswar Dewaloi, Tamreswar Dewaloi and *brahmottor* land to Hatibaruas, etc. Some sale taxes were also realized. For instance, it is reported that four to eight *annas* were collected as a sale tax on every cow or ox sold in Darrang (Dorong).  

The *Darrangi Rajas* also received presents like *musk* and *cowtails* (*sower*) from the Bhutanese for the territory north of Gohain Kamal Ali ceded to them. After the establishment of the Ahom overlordship, the *Darrangi Rajas* had to supply 6,000 *mul* as tribute to serve under the Ahom government, which was placed in charge of the Barphukan at Gauhati. However, it did not remain fixed for all times. Sometimes it was increased or decreased according to need of the Ahom Government. Generally it was not increased by more than ten thousand and not less than three thousand. One *paik* relieved another taking food from home. This act was known as 'Darrangi paikar sambal'. Moreover, the *Darrangi Rajas* had to offer the Ahom kings rich presents at different occasions especially in the time of coronation. Such presents generally included good quantity of gold, horses, yak tails, clothes, blankets, etc. Thus, the *Darrangi* people were overburdened by the tribute payable to the Ahom kingdom.

Hence it can be concluded that agriculture was the backbone of the economy of the *Darrangi Raiya*. They chiefly depended on agriculture for their livelihood. Although cultivation was carried on through traditional and simple method, the *Darrangi* cultivators had the knowledge of irrigation technology. The technology behind the construction of the ponds was indigenous and remarkable. Participation of both men and women in the agricultural work was the general feature, yet the systems of *marakia*, *adhi* and *sauri* or mutual co-operation were the prevailing mode of labour. These systems

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146 Ibid.
147 Francis Hamilton, op. cit. p. 50.
helped not only in the economic progress but also in achieving social unity and cooperation. It can be specially observed that the women almost exclusively did some of the works such as transplanting and all the process from husking to cooking rice. Primarily agriculturists, the people adopted crafts and industrial work as the secondary occupation during their leisure period. Women were largely employed in some crafts such as pottery-making and weaving. The role of women in the agricultural economy was important. Thus the Darrangi craftsmen provided almost all the necessary articles for local use. So a self-sufficient village economy was the basic feature of the economy of the Darrangi Rajya. They specialized in some crafts like rearing of patpalu or silkworms, pottery-making and brass and bell-metal industries and these became the monopoly trade of particular communities, while the other crafts and industrial work were open to all castes or communities. The products of these crafts and industries primarily met the local demand, and the surplus was exported.

Some of the products, both agricultural and industrial such as mustard, tobacco, lac, pat and muga, brass and bell-metal utensils had high demand in the markets outside the state, earning good profits. The natural resources made no less impact on the economy of the rajya. Particularly gold, aloe wood and elephant had great value in the trade-fairs. Extensive route and communication system made easy to the outside merchants to trade with the Darrangi Rajya. All these turned the rajya into a place of lucrative trade, integrating it to the world market. Nevertheless, the economy of the Darrangi Rajya was limited and therefore, the people were overburdened by the tribute payable to the Ahom King, which had serious consequences that will be dealt with in the next chapter.